

## JANUARY 1998 NEWSLETTER GAY FATHERS OF SACRAMENTO

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### President's Corner

By John Merical

### HAPPY NEW YEAR!

I hope everyone had a safe and wonderful Christmas and the start of a great New Year. I would like to thank Francis and Justin for opening their home and hearts for the annual December dinner for Gay Fathers of Sacramento. Although I missed it rumor had it that it was great. With that in mind, let's hope 1998 is just as good if not better than 1997. There are some changes that will impact our group. It is discussed in another article in this issue.

A magazine (*Marie Claire*) article titled, "My Parents Are Gay" and written by Sharon Krum, was given to me by my ex-wife last month. She felt we might be interested in the article. It consisted of four different living situations of gay parents and their children and the positive things coming out of their household. I thought it was pretty good and decided to pass it on in the newsletter. It discussed how both parents and children learn to live and survive in gay living situations in a homophobic society. I know how difficult it can sometimes be to find time to read, so I'm going to spread this out over a 4-month period. Enjoy.

**"People assume living in a gay household will make you gay-----ridiculous!"**

Kellen Kaiser, 16 lives in San Francisco with her mothers, Nina and Nora. In elementary school I was taunted for having lesbian mothers, and as I grew older I became very sensitive to anti-gay remarks. If anyone in the school

even dropped anti-gay slurs, I would challenge them. When I was younger, I was sometimes embarrassed when my mothers were affectionate in public, and I'd ask them to cut it out. By the time I was a teenager, I was over that. I am incredibly proud of them and love them both madly.

My mother met Nora when I was 5, and they got married in a commitment ceremony when I was 5 1/2. There was a lot of teasing, and people told me my parents couldn't be married, which was very traumatic because it completely invalidated who I was.

I think it is ridiculous that people think you need a mother and father to raise a healthy child. Biology doesn't make a family---love does. They should meet my family. There are two mons, and so much to love---more than in most nuclear families. They both discipline me and argue with me, and I don't feel I lost anything by not having a father. If anything they've both been my role models for loving relationship that involves respect and compassion.

My father and I have an on-and-off relationship. He learned of my existence when I was 3, and since then I have seen him a couple of times. I'm sure when I was younger I wondered what it would be like, but the support in my family is so strong. If your parents are good enough, it doesn't matter that they do not form a traditional family.

I have plenty of male role-models. Both my mothers adore men, so I was raised in a house that was not anti-male. Society at large has given me male-role models and I always have male friends, teachers, and grandparents to turn to.

People assume living in a gay

household will make you gay. That is ridiculous. I think these assumptions come from ignorance and prejudice. I am straight, and it came to me naturally and early on. I think my mothers gave me different things in equal measure. Nina and I are incredibly similar. We look alike; we share interests. She is my best friend and she sets the rules. Nora waivers; she is more of a softie. Nora is really wise, and she has taught me a lot about people.

The hard thing for kids is before you start school, you are not exposed to homophobia, but once you're in school, you're bombarded with it. I think schools have to, play a part in this. Just as you reach that racism is wrong, you should teach the homophobia is wrong.

### JANUARY SOCIAL ACTIVITY

Our first social activity will be on **Saturday, January 24th at 7 p.m.** This is for dads and their children, single, or you can bring a friend or partner. Prizes will be given. We will meet at Country Club Lanes at 2600 Watt Avenue, north of I-80. For directions call 483-5105. We can bowl, order pizza and have a great time.

### Lambda Center Moves:

John Merical

If you have not heard, the Lambda Center is moving from its present location (919 20th Street across the street to 920 20th Street. The lambda



staff will start it's moving on January 10, and will open its doors on Monday January 19<sup>th</sup>. There is an issue that impacts our group. In the past the President had a key to get into the center. We will no longer have a key for weekend meetings. The Lambda Center's Board of Directors made the decision and will now be dependent on someone from the lambda staff to let us in every second Sunday of the month. The good thing is it's only once a month and not weekly some of the other groups that meets on a weekly basis. I would very much like any input or suggestions from our group for alternative solutions. Please leave a short message at my residence or, or call the Dad's Hotline and leave a phone number, and best time to call you.

The last thing I wish to discuss is the late delivery of the newsletter. Between Christmas activity, those dreaded flu bugs going around,, and my computer getting a virus, I was the one holding up the show. Sorry.

## BEING A FATHER

by Mark Wininger

Being a good father has never been easy. Under today's rules it has even gotten a lot harder, and for a gay father there are few guidelines.

- So how does a gay father be a good father and how do we measure our success?
- In our attempt to evaluate our abilities as fathers, which guidelines should we use?
- What makes a gay father good or bad?
- Obviously, many standards of fatherhood are universal such as compassion, sacrifice, and patience. But what about some of the heterosexual labels that we allow others to apply?
- Isn't a good father also a good husband?

Since most of us have been married

and are now divorced, have we failed in marriage, and are therefore failures as gay fathers?

If we were to listen to and believe the homophobic rhetoric about diminished morals and poor lifestyle choices we would all be failures as fathers. The many examples of good, successful gay fathers are evident when we start to meet and share our experiences with each other. Being a good father is not dependent upon our sexual orientation but rather upon our love and devotion to our children. Sometimes our shortcomings are not in our skills as gay fathers but rather in the way we let other people tell us who we should have been.

Often our self-esteem as fathers is attached to our guilt from the divorce. But our relationship as husband and wife is not synonymous with being a father. We attach a lot of guilt to coming out and the establishment of our gay identity. Coming out is filled with stress, yet the rewards are wonderful. Time after time, I have heard of how much more fulfilling and open a gay father's relationship is with their children after they have come out of the closet. Some fathers reestablish their relationship as gay fathers with relative ease while others struggle, trying to rebuild shattered relationships. For some, the relationship of parent and child is inflexible and leaves little room for new direction while for others the relationship seems to thrive and grow even better.

We must remember some of our problems are not because we are gay, but simply because that is the relationship we have established with our children. Some of these struggles are the same for all fathers, both gay and straight. Allowing ourselves to feel guilty because we

are gay lets others judge and label us. We are fathers and should treat our relationship with our children as such. In fact, being gay adds many wonderful qualities to our own personalities and therefore enhances our abilities as fathers. Being gay does not diminish our abilities to be good fathers.

Coming together as gay fathers provides a support group and communication network. It allows friendships to develop. We have an opportunity for social interactions through monthly meetings and social activities with opportunities to share positive experiences. Our meetings allow ourselves to share without judgement and to receive support from others who are facing the same difficulties that we are struggling with. We are not alone in our struggles to be gay fathers.

This year we hope to provide an opportunity for more social activities and increased membership. We want to know what you would like to see happen in Gay Fathers of Sacramento. What do you like or don't like?

Our goal is to have a monthly potluck meeting and at least one monthly social activity. These activities could be for members only or a father-child activity. We could meet at a restaurant or have a picnic and play softball. Let us know so that our group can bring greater joy to your life as a gay father. This is your group, lets have a great time this year.

## NOTICE

All article contributions to this newsletter are welcome. Please submit your article no later than the 30th of the month to:  
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Thank you for your contributions.